

Message Text

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S E C R E T SECTO 2063

NODIS/CHEROKEE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SA, US
SUBJECT: MY TALKS IN SAUDI ARABIA

FOR THE PRESIDENT FROM SECRETARY VANCE

1. IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING MY ARRIVAL IN RIYADH FROM AMMAN, I MET IN RAPID SUCCESSION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER PRINCE SAUD AND CROWN PRINCE FAHDN WHO IS ALSO REGENT DURING KING KHALID'S ABSENCE FROM THE KINGDOM FOR SURGERY IN LONDON. WHILE SAUDI ARABIA IS NOT A DIRECT PARTY TO THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE NEGOTIATIONS, ITS LEADERS AS YOU KNOW HAVE BEEN PLAYING AN ACTIVE ROLE IN MOBILIZING THE ARAB GOVERNMENTS DIRECTLY CONCERNED AND THE PALESTINIANS FOR THE RESUMPTION OF PEACE NEGOTIATIONS THIS YEAR. THROUGH-OUT OUR TALKS, BOTH THE CROWN PRINCE AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER STRESSED REPEATEDLY THAT A "GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY" EXISTED NOW TO MOVE TOWARD A SETTLEMENT AND THT, IF THIS OPPORTUNITY WERE NOT SEIZED, THE MIDDLE EAST PENDULUM WOULD SWING BACK TOWARD RADICALISM AND WAR. IT IS CLEAR THAT THE SAUDIS HAVE STAKED A GREAT DEAL ON THE SUCCESS OF THEIR EFFORTS TO CREATE CONDITIONS THAT WILL MINIMIZE OBSTACLES ON THE ARAB SIDE TO GETTING NEGOTIATIONS STARTED. IT IS ALSO CLEAR THAT THE OVERRIDING CONSIDERATION FOR THEM
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IS THEIR FEAR THAT FAILURE TO MAKE PROGRESS TOWARD SETTLEMENT WILL LEAD TO A NEW PERIOD OF INSTABILITY IN THE AREA WHICH WOULD UNLEASH FORCES THREATENING THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE SAUDI REGIME AND OF THE OTHER GOVERN-MENTS IN THE PRESENT COALITION OF MODERATE ARAB STATES
2. CLOSELY RELATED TO THIS CONCERN IS THE DEEP-SEATED SAUDI FEAR OF A RESURGENCE OF SOVIET INFLUENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. THE CROWN PRINCE IN PARTICULAR DWELT UPON THIS AT LENGTH. STRESSING THE KINGDOM'S COMMITMENT TO ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S., ITS WILLINGNESS TO STAND UP PUBLICLY FOR THIS RELATIONSHIP EVEN WHEN THIS WAS

POLITICALLY

UNPOPULAR, AND ITS FAITH THAT THE U.S. WOULD NOT LET SAUDI ARABIA DOWN.

3. I MET FIRST WITH FOREIGN MINISTER PRINCE SAUD AND

WENT OVER WITH HIM THE PURPOSE OF MY TRIP, THE PRINCIPAL PROCEDURAL AND SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES WE ARE EXPLORING WITH THE NEGOTIATING PARTIES, AND DESCRIBED FOR HIM MY IMPRESSIONS SO FAR FROM MY TALKS IN ISRAEL, EGYPT, LEBANON AND JORDAN. AS WAS THE CASE IN MY MEETINGS IN OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES, SAUD STRESSED THE PRIMACY OF THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE IN ARAB EYES.

I DISCUSSED AT SOME LENGTH THE DIFFICULTY FOR ISRAEL AND FOR US OF INCLUDING THE PLO IN THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS SO LONG AS THE PLO DOES NOT MODIFY ITS CONVENANT TO RECOGNIZE ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST. SAUD MADE THE FAMILIAR ARGUMENT THAT IT WAS UNREASONABLE TO ASK THE PLO TO ACCEPT ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST AS AN INDEPENDENT STATE SO LONG AS ISRAEL DID NOT GRANT THE SAME RIGHT TO THE PALESTINIANS. WHILE WE REACHED NO MEETING OF THE MINDS ON THIS POINT, I BELIEVE IT HAS BEEN USEFUL HERE AND IN MY OTHER STOPS TO CONTINUE TO STRESS THAT THE ARABS MUST SORT OUT THE PALESTINIAN SECRET

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PARTICIPATION ISSUE IN THE FIRST INSTANCE AMONG

THEMSELVES. AS HAD BEEN THE CASE IN CAIRO, PLO CHAIRMAN ARAFAT WAS IN RIYADH AND MET WITH THE SAUDI LEADERS IMMEDIATELY BEFORE MY TALKS, WHICH FURTHER REINFORCES OUR IMPRESSION THAT THE ARAB GOVERNMENTS ARE IN FACT DEVOTING CONSIDERABLE EFFORT TO PRESSING THE PLO TO MODERATE ITS POSITION.

4. CROWN PRINCE FAHD SPENT THE FIRST ONE AND ONE-HALF HOURS OF OUR MEETING IN THE BROAD-RANGING APPEAL FOR THE U.S. TO GENERATE EARLY MOVEMENT ON THE PEACEMAKING FRONT. HE CONTRASTED THE REFUSAL OF PALESTINIAN AND OTHER ARAB LEADERS UNTIL RECENTLY EVEN TO CONTEMPLATE MAKING PEACE WITH ISRAEL WITH THEIR PRESENT WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE A PEACE SETTLEMENT THAT WOULD RECOGNIZE THE EXISTENCE OF A SOVEREIGN ISRAELI STATE. LIKE PRINCE SAUD, HE STRESSED THE PRIMACY OF THE PALESTINIAN ASPECT OF THE PROBLEM, AS WELL AS THE NEED TO END THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF ARAB TERRITORY. SINCE SAUDI ARABIA IS NOT A CONFRONTATION STATE AND IS NOT A DIRECT PARTY TO THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS, THE SAUDIS HAVE CLEARLY NOT GIVEN THOUGHT TO THE QUESTION OF RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL UNDER A PEACE SETTLEMENT AND SIMPLY STRESS THE WILLINGNESS OF THE ARAB CONFRONTATION STATES AND, THEY INSIST, THE PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP TO MAKE PEACE WITH ISRAEL FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY. THEY HAVE NOT CONCERNED

THEMSELVES WITH THE PROCEDURAL QUESTIONS OF GETTING THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS STARTED AND TOOK NO EXCEPTION TO MY JUDGMENT THAT IT WAS UNREALISTIC TO THINK OF RE-CONVENING THE GENEVA CONFERENCE BEFORE THE SECOND HALF OF THIS YEAR. THEIR EMPHASIS IS ON THE NEED FOR GETTING A PROCESS STARTED WHICH HOLDS OUT HOPE OF MEANINGFUL PROGRESS, AND THEY SEEM TO BE REALISTIC ABOUT THE TIME IT WILL TAKE TO COMPLETE THAT PROCESS. PRINCE FAHD AT ONE POINT SPOKE OF THE NEED TO REACH A SOLUTION IN THE 1977-78 TIMEFRAME. INTERESTINGLY, NEITHER FAHD
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NOR SAUD MENTIONED JERUSALEM.

5. PRINCE FAHD ALSO DEVOTED A PART OF HIS PRESENTATION TO U.S.-SAUDI RELATIONS, MAKING CLEAR THAT THESE COULD NOT HELP BUT BE AFFECTED BY WHAT HAPPENS ON THE PEACEMAKING FRONT. HE WAS CAREFUL, HOWEVER, TO AVOID ANY SUGGESTION OF A QUID PRO QUO RELATIONSHIP.

WITH RESPECT TO THE OIL PRICE QUESTION, HE EXPLICITLY STATED THAT THE SAUDI DECISION AT THE LAST OPEC MEETING WAS NOT TAKEN WITH ANY IDEA OF USING IT AS A BARGAINING LEVER. HE DEVOTED CONSIDERABLE TIME TO SAUDI ARABIA'S SECURITY REQUIREMENTS AND REFLECTED SOME CONCERN ABOUT THE FUTURE OF OUR ARMS SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP. HE DID NOT PRESS FOR ANY EARLY DECISIONS BUT SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR SAUDI ARABIA TO KNOW TO WHAT EXTENT IT COULD DEPEND UPON THE U.S. AS A RELIABLE SUPPLIER OF ITS SECURITY NEEDS. HE REFERRED SPECIFICALLY TO THE SAUDI REQUEST FOR F-15 AIRCRAFT, WHICH HE HOPED TO HAVE A RESPONSE TO WHEN HE VISITS WASHINGTON IN APRIL. IN ORDER THAT SAUDI ARABIA COULD PLAN FOR THE FUTURE, HE SUGGESTED THAT WE WORK TOGETHER ON A LONG-TERM PROJECTION OF OUR POLICY GOVERNING MILITARY SALES TO SAUDI ARABIA SO THAT THE KINGDOM COULD MAKE ITS OWN PLANS WITH RESPECT TO INDIVIDUAL REQUIREMENTS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF AN OVERALL POLICY CONCEPT.

6. PRINCE FAHD ALSO SPOKE AT LENGTH AND WITH CONSIDERABLE INTENSITY ABOUT THE PROBLEMS THAT WOULD FLOW FROM ANTI-BOYCOTT LEGISLATION IN THE U.S. SUCH LEGISLATION, HE SAID, WOULD CAUSE SERIOUS DAMAGE TO OUR RELATIONS AND AMERICAN COMMERCIAL INTERESTS IN SAUDI ARABIA. HE URGED THE ADMINISTRATION TO EXPLAIN THIS PROBLEM TO THE CONGRESS AND TO ENCOURAGE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS TO VISIT
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SAUDI ARABIA TO OBTAIN A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE COMPLEXITY OF THE PROBLEM. HE CONCLUDED WITH AN APPEAL

FOR A REASONABLE APPROACH BEFORE IRREVERSIBLE TRENDS WERE SET INTO MOTION. IT WILL BE POSSIBLE, HE SAID, TO SOLVE ANY PROBLEMS BETWEEN US ON THIS ISSUE QUIETLY THROUGH DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN US PROVIDED THE SAUDIS DO NOT APPEAR TO BE ACTING IN RESPONSE TO THE PUBLIC THREAT OF U.S. LEGISLATIVE ACTION.

7. I CONVEYED OO PRINCE FAHD YOUR INVITATION TO VISIT WASHINGTON, WHICH HE RECEIVED WITH PLEASURE. IN COMMENTING ON PRINCE FAHD'S PRESENTATION, I MADE A NUMBER OF POINTS. WITH RESPECT TO PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST, I STRESSED OUR DESIRE TO WORK WITH SAUDI ARABIA FOR A SETTLEMENT AND TOLD FAHD WE SHARED HIS CONCERNS ABOUT SOVIET OBJECTIVES IN THE AREA. I ALSO STRESSED THAT WE BELIEVE NO PEACE CAN BE ACHIEVED WITHOUT A SOLUTION TO THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM AS WELL AS TO THE OTHER TWO KEY ISSUES -- THE NATURE OF PEACE AND ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL. FAHD AND SAUD AGREED THAT THESE ARE THE THREE OVERRIDING ISSUES WHICH MUST BE ADDRESSED IN NEGOTIATIONS. WITH RESPECT TO WITHDRAWAL, I TOLD FAHD WE CONTINUE TO SUPPORT RESOLUTION 242, WHICH DEALS AMONG OTHER THINGS WITH THE TERRITORIAL QUESTION. WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THE QUESTION OF PLO PARTICIPATION REMAINED A POINT OF MAJOR DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE PARTIES, I EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT IT WOULD NOT BE BEYOND THE INGENUITY OF ALL CONCERNED TO FIND A SOLUTION. WITH REGARD TO OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS, I TOLD FAHD WE WOULD DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO STRENGTHEN THEM FURTHER. ON THE ARMS QUESTION, I EXPLAINED THAT WE WERE REVIEWING OUR POLICY ACROSS THE BOARD AND AGREED WITH HIS SUGGESTION THAT THE TWO OF US SHOULD FIND A WAY TO PLAN AHEAD SYSTEMATICALLY ON A LONG-TERM BASIS. WE AGREED THIS IDEA COULD BE DISCUSSED FURTHER DURING HIS VISIT. ON THE BOYCOTT, SECRET

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I TOLD FAHD THAT CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS WOULD BEGIN THE END OF THIS MONTH, THAT WE WERE STILL WORKING OUT AN ADMINISTRATION POSITION AND THAT IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IN PREPARING MY CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY IF THEY CONVEYED THROUGH AMBASSADOR PORTER WHAT STEPS THEY MIGHT TAKE. FINALLY, I EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR SAUDI ARABIA'S MODERATING ROLE ON THE ARAB-ISRAELI PROBLEM AND SAID YOU LOOKED FORWARD TO DISCUSSING ALL OF THESE MATTERS FURTHER WITH HIM DURING HIS VISIT IN APRIL.

8. FOLLOWING A DINNER HOSTED BY PRINCE SAUD, HE TOOK ME TO HIS HOME FOR A PRIVATE DISCUSSION WHICH I BELIEVE WILL PROVE TO HAVE BEEN EXTREMELY USEFUL. WE TALKED AT LENGTH ON A PHILOSOPHICAL LEVEL ABOUT THEIR AND OUR PREMISES AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT. WE ALSO HAD A FURTHER DISCUSSION OF THE BOYCOTT

PROBLEM DURING WHICH PRINCE SAUD FORESHADOWED WHAT
I HOPE WILL BE SOME MODIFICATIONS IN SAUDI POLICY.
HE SAID THAT SAUDI ARABIA'S CONCERN WAS ONLY WITH AMERICA
LEGISLATION THAT APPEARED TO TELL SAUDI ARABIA WHAT IT SHOULD
DO SO FAR AS ITS OWN LEGISLATION AND ITS PRIMARY
BOYCOTT OF ISRAEL ARE CONCERNED. SAUD SAID THAT THEY
DO NOT WANT THIS ISSUE TO DISRUPT US - SAUDI ECONOMIC
OR POLITICAL RELATIONS AND THAT THEY WOULD HAVE NO
PROBLEM WITH LEGISLATION DIRECTED SOLELY TO
PROTECTING THE INTERESTS OF AMERICAN COMPANIES AND
INDIVIDUALS. IT IS CLEAR THAT THEY WANT TO WORK
WITH US ON WAYS OF AMELIORATING THIS PROBLEM BUT DO
NOT FEEL THEY WILL BE ABLE TO DO SO IF IT BECOMES
A MATTER OF PUBLIC CONFRONTATION BETWEEN US THROUGH
ACTIONS THE CONGRESS MAY TAKE.
VANCE

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